



# SARAJEVO OPEN CENTRE

## **STRATEGIC PLAN Period 2013-2015**

Finished in July 2013

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## **Introduction**

Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) is an organization dedicated to promoting full respect of human rights and decreasing the level of discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sarajevo Open Centre is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization, which empowers women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons through community activities, promotes the human rights of women and LGBT persons and advocates for improved legislation and policies in BiH institutions.

SOC was established in 2007, registered as association of citizens on state level and has grown up to a respectable non-governmental organization in BiH. From 2007-2011 we have been working on different projects related to political science research and political education, literature and film promotion and interreligious education. 2011 we opened our first office and had our activists constantly working in the Sarajevo Open Centre. The team grew from 3 (2011) to 10 (July 2013) members.

We actively participate in the following networks: BiH Women's Network; BiH Coalition against hate speech and hate crime; BiH Coalition "Equality" against ethnic discrimination; Regional Network against Homophobia, BaBelNor Network on LGBT rights; BiH Peace Network and BiH Justice Network.

At the end of 2012 we decided to outsource our social science research work to a new spin off organisation that has been recently funded: the Centre for Political Studies ([www.cps.ba](http://www.cps.ba)). The Centre for Political Studies is an independent and non-profit think tank organization that promotes active political participation through research, education and advocacy.

For the upcoming period 2013-2015 SOC is going to focus on two programmes: LGBT rights and Women rights. We will continue also supporting other human rights and civil society initiatives, which contribute to social and political development in BiH.

## **Achievements of Sarajevo Open Centre 2010-2013**

### **Advocating for rights of LGBT persons**

- we established the only civil society lead LGBT human rights violation documentation system in BiH, that have resulted in an Annual report on LGBT rights for 2012;
- we started the first educational programme for young lawyers on LGBT rights;
- we implemented a countrywide monitoring of the implementation of the of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation on measures of combat against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity;
- we actively participate in the EU integration process monitoring, by being part of the civil society consultations for the EU annual progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Sarajevo Open Centre representatives have been representing the human rights situation of LGBT persons in BiH in different international conferences/programmes, as for example the Human Dimension Meeting of the OSCE in Warsaw in October 2011, the First regional LGBT conference in Tirana in June 2012 and the first US State Department organized study visit that is dealing with LGBT rights in four US cities;
- we built up first relations to the police agencies in different parts of BiH, and agreed with them to set up posters saying "Police is there to protect all citizens! LGBT persons are welcome here!" in their police stations, and we made contact with the police in Canton Sarajevo and now have our own contact officer within its police;
- we advocated against the discriminatory questionnaires' at the blood donation institutes in BiH which stated that "everyone who had permanent or occasional contact with homosexuals was prohibited from donating blood", after the action of LGBT activists and advocacy work of SOC, the discriminatory questionnaire is changed in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH),
- we gave the initiative to the FBiH Parliament to introduce hate crime in the FBiH Criminal law which is accepted (amendments' are in the process of drafting) and are one of the founders of the Coalition for combat against hate crime and hate speech which is advocating for proper regulation of hate crime and hate speech on all state levels.

### **Promoting rights of LGBT persons in culture and media**

- in order to provide a web portal that will contain news concerning LGBT persons/issues which as well as information on the position of LGBT persons and their rights in BiH, we are running the first and only web portal on LGBT rights in BiH: [www.lgbt-prava.ba](http://www.lgbt-prava.ba)
- we published different books and publications, focusing on rights, identity and culture of LGBT persons; the books have been distributed to all BiH public libraries and presented on different occasions

- we organized dozens LGBT film screenings, discussions, exhibitions and film weekends in Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla, Zenica and Banja Luka aimed at raising the awareness of public on the issues LGBT persons face every day
- on the occasion of May 17<sup>th</sup> – International Day Against Homophobia we implemented the first online and radio campaign, promoting LGBT rights

### **Support to LGBT persons**

- we started offering a specialized legal counselling to LGBT persons, that is supported by different guides for the LGBT community
- we are organizing touring empowerment workshops for LGBT persons in Tuzla, Mostar, Sarajevo, Zenica and Banja Luka, which all consist of different educational areas, such as history of LGBT persons, religion and its relationship towards LGBT persons, language and its proper usage, proper terminology and human rights of LGBT persons and their protection
- on regular basis we organize community events in our office, offering a safe place for information sharing and empowerment

### **Women rights**

- we coordinated a non-formal civil society coalition, producing a shadow report for the CEDAW committee and the screening of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- we started a programme related to the topic Gender of Security, with countrywide round tables, information sharing and networking forums and publications;
- we have published the book on feminism from very diverse perspectives (from linguistic, to politics, etc) and presented within the programme of the 2013 8<sup>th</sup> of March, the International Day of Women
- we have organized 2012 a seven day training programme - Leadership Political Academy - which brought together 30 politicians from 17 parties
- we published a first introduction to the parliamentarianism in BiH and we implemented a research on parliamentarianism in BiH, Montenegro and Serbia, as a basis for political leadership trainings in the future

### **Capacity Building and networking**

- we organized different capacity building actions, related to: free legal aid, documentation of human rights violation, advocacy and lobbying, organisational management, trans rights
- we have been invited and successfully attended all capacity building activities and networking events that have been offered to our team in BiH and different European countries.

## **DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR 2013-2015**

### **Specific objectives**

- To increase awareness among state institutions/officials about the necessity to fully implement International, European and national human rights standards towards women and LGBT persons
- To raise citizens awareness about rights of women and LGBT persons
- To empower and strengthen the LGBT community by implementing supportive community based activities, related to their rights and needs

### **Values**

- Proactive: we are finding solutions before problems arise
- Communicative: we have established adequate channels of communications with stake holders and our target groups
- Innovative and creative: we introduce new methods and working areas
- Partnership and networking: we have established good relationships with similar NGOs and initiatives working in the same areas
- Sensible for minority groups: posses adequate expertise that enable us to have a sensible approach towards the needs and problems of our target groups
- Solidarity and support: we have solidarity with other initiatives that share the same values and we provide support to those in need
- Good position within the society: our image as an proactive and reliable NGO insured us the position of one of the leaders in our working area
- Team work: we are effective and efficient due to the good management and skilful personal
- Capable to learn continually: we posses willingness to enhance our capacities in order to response to new challenges

### **Target groups**

- LGBT persons and activists/human rights defenders are proactively participating in our activities
- Civil society organisations active in the field of human rights protection/anti-discrimination, particularly those that are ready to support our gay-straight alliance action
- State officials (legislative and executive) active in different ministries and agencies accountable for human rights and anti-discrimination, but also civil servants in the field of health, security and judiciary.
- Women active in political, social and cultural life, interested in political participation activities
- Youth interested into human rights, between 18 and 35 years, with affiliation to voluntarism
- Representatives of political parties that are willing to be active on the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation and policies
- Media

## **PROGRAMME: WOMEN RIGHTS - Priorities 2013-2015**

Even though women represent more than the half of BiH population, women rights are still threaten as a minority group issue. Women are facing discrimination and violence in their family surrounding; they are exposed to discriminatory treatments in labour relations and have only limited access to political life and decision-making processes. Intersectional discrimination is a visible problem.

Sarajevo Open Centre will focus on the following measures in order to improve the position of women in BiH society:

- we will organize and support political empowerment and political education activities, with the aim to increase the participation of women in BiH political system;
- we will contribute to the international advocacy (EU Progress Report, CEDAW Committee, UN Universal Periodic Review) processes;
- we will implement arts public awareness campaign, promotion women arts production and using art as a tool for human rights promotion;
- we will initiate common actions and contribute to existing one, that aim to advocate for women rights and to raise public awareness;

Success indicators:

- Sarajevo Open Centre's cultural/artistic actions have raised the general public's awareness of the women's rights and the level of their political and social participation;
- Sarajevo Open Centre does contribute to national and international advocacy actions

## **PROGRAMME: LGBT RIGHTS - Priorities 2013-2015**

Nowadays in BiH society the LGBT community is one of the most invisible, weakest and marginalized societal groups. LGBT persons are exposed to discrimination, violence and hate speech. The majority of BiH citizens are full of stereotypes and prejudices towards LGBT persons, ready to use violence. Beside non-formal activists groups, there is no strategic and focused activism working on public awareness and advocacy and legal issues. The Anti-discrimination law in place covers sexual orientation and gender expression, but rarely used because of the invisibility of LGBT persons and their fear to proceed legal cases. BiH federal structure allows only limited and very slow developments in the improvement of the rights situation of LGBT persons.

Sarajevo Open Centre will focus on the following measures in order to improve the position of LGBT persons in BiH society:

### *Support for the LGBT community*

- we will continue implementing countrywide community support activities, covering social activities (community events) but also legal counselling; support groups and psychological counselling will be introduced;
- LGBT persons will actively take part in our programme; activities will be developed based on their needs;
- We will support the countrywide development of LGBT activism;

Success indicator:

- LGBT activism groups in regional centres in BiH are strengthened to implement independent advocacy actions

### *Advocating for the rights of LGBT persons*

- We will implement direct advocacy actions towards BiH institutions; institutions of interest will be selected and the cooperation with them will get more intensive;
- Human rights violation (violence, discrimination etc.) towards LGBT persons will be countrywide documented
- We will use European and international human rights mechanisms (EU progress report, UPR, CEDAW etc) more intensive
- LGBT issues will be mainstreamed into political parties

Success indicator:

- The legal and institutional protection of rights of LGBT persons has increased, concrete measures are undertaken

### *Promoting rights of LGBT persons in public life*

- we will implement public campaigns, using different media
- culture and arts will be used as a tool to promote the rights of LGBT persons in BiH public life

- we will strengthen our own media actions (writing articles for BiH print and online media; further development of [lgbt-prava.ba](http://lgbt-prava.ba))

Success indicator:

- LGBT issues are more visible in public life and the rights of LGBT persons are a topic of importance in political discussions

## **ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Priorities 2013-2015**

From 2011 till 2013 Sarajevo Open Centre developed from a grass root initiative, without a constant organisational structure and with a ad-hoc-project based work, to a stabile organization. Today, we have an office, that is run by the Executive Director and Administrative Board. Programmes are implemented by the Programme Coordinators (6), under the supervision of the Programme Manager (1). Administrative and financial tasks are implemented by the Coordinators (2). Financially, Sarajevo Open Centre managed to increase its finances from 50.000 EUR in 2008 to 250.000 EUR in 2012.

Sarajevo Open Centre will focus on the following measures in order to improve the organizational development:

- we will re-new the Administrative Board, having tree new, independent members, with a proactive approach
- we will continue investing into capacity building of our stuff, not only trough educative projects offered by other organisations, but also trough internal educative measures (for example annual team building and information sharing workshops)
- we will try to manage financial stability on a mid-term perspective (two to three years)
- we will increase internal control systems (evaluation, financial control) in order to demonstrate our full dedication to high standards

## Sarajevo Open Centre structure

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Steering Board from 2013:  
Aida Spahić, Elmaja Bavčić and Arijana Aganović

### **The team of the Sarajevo Open Centre (April 2013):**

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